

HOW DO TEACHERS ENGAGE WITH AND MEDIATE DECOLONIAL PRACTICES IN HISTORY EDUCATION?



ZAIBA PATEL

BACKGROUND

- Teachers are increasingly making changes to their school curricula to make them more diverse and inclusive, particularly in the wake of the murder of George Floyd
- Teachers are asking for help when teaching these difficult and often controversial histories
- The political climate of culture wars in the UK, and attendant discourses around nationhood and identity have a long history and heavily implicate school history
- There's a dearth of research on what decoloniality or antiracism might look like in UK school classrooms
- Varied language is used - diversity, decolonisation, antiracism, inclusion are often adopted but what do they mean to teachers? How effective are these initiatives?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do teachers/educators define and engage with decolonisation/antiracism?

Why do some teachers/educators see decoloniality/antiracism as important?

What do teachers/educators think impedes antiracist/decolonial practice in education?

What might help teachers/educators to engage with antiracist/decolonial practices in education?

What further research in relation to antiracist/decolonial practices would teachers/educators appreciate?

DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGY

Decolonial research seeks to overturn harmful, exploitative and extractive research practices by reformulating the positions of 'researcher' and 'researched'. I sought to find ways this could be possible within the confines of producing a DPhil thesis. These are some of the practices I adopted:

ORIENTING MYSELF

I oriented myself as a learner, and participants as experts. I practiced relational humility, emphasising ecological validity. Part of this involved waiving participant anonymity.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research phases were co-constructed, developed iteratively in relation to participant needs.

RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

Care, reciprocity and trust were placed at the forefront. Critical reflexivity was crucial to this, allowing me to constantly pay attention to power dynamics.

"RECLAIMING RESEARCH STARTS WITH DECOLONIZING SPACES WHERE RESEARCH HAPPENS SUCH AS THE ACADEMY"

(Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021, p. 6)

PHASE 1 - MAPPING THE TERRAIN

1. QUESTIONNAIRE

Individual questionnaires to allow participants to explore their understandings of, and encounters with, decolonisation and antiracism



2. INTERVIEW

Interviews were based on questionnaire responses. I asked participants to elaborate and explore ideas further.



3. FOCUS GROUP

Participants came together to share examples of decolonial and/or antiracist work they had been doing

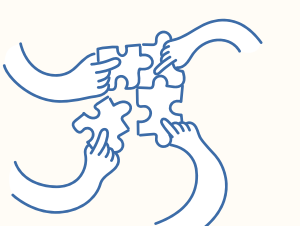


PHASE 2 - CASE STUDY ANALYSIS WITH HISTORY TEACHERS

Through Phase 1, I became increasingly interested in how and why decoloniality and antiracism looked different in different contexts

4. FOCUS GROUP

Participants will complete a graphic elicitation exercise, drawing their contexts. We'll plan which schools might be interesting case studies.



5. CASE STUDY

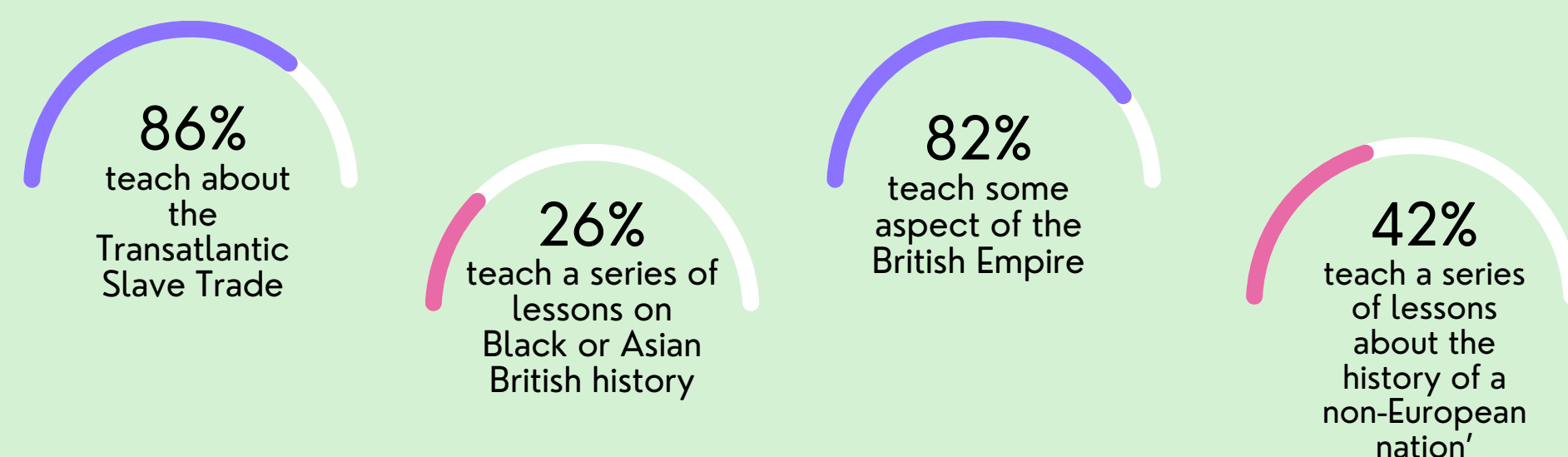
Comparative case studies will be conducted in two schools. I'll take a tracing approach, investigating how decoloniality and/or antiracism has developed in different settings.



CHALLENGING EUROCENTRICITY?

According to a 2021 Historical Association survey, schools are increasingly diversifying content, but what would it mean for Eurocentricity to actually be challenged in a decolonial or antiracist way?

The data suggests that in schools...



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS - PHASE 1

HOW ARE TEACHERS ENGAGING WITH ANTIRACISM AND DECOLONIALITY?

- 18 PARTICIPANTS
- 9 HISTORY TEACHERS
- 3 HISTORY EDUCATORS WORKING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLS
- 1 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER
- 1 BUSINESS TEACHER
- 1 CREATIVE ARTS TEACHER
- 1 ENGLISH TEACHER
- 1 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER
- 1 HIGHER EDUCATION LECTURER

- Decoloniality can take many different forms - local histories, whole-school initiatives, material objects, educating staff, pedagogies of emancipation
- Decolonial and antiracist education can be deeply emotive and transformative for teachers and pupils
- Teachers would benefit from connecting with others to create communities of practice

LITERATURE

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